

# Plans Review Process

An owner hires a Tennessee registered architect or engineer to prepare design drawings for a building or structure when a plans submittal to the Codes Enforcement Section of the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) is required. This could be for a new building, addition to an existing building, change of occupancy, or renovation. **It is a violation of state law to begin construction before receiving a SFMO Plans Approval.** [Rule 0780-2-3-.02 Submission of Plans] A local building official is forbidden by law to issue a building permit for construction without first receiving a SFMO Plans Approval Letter when the SFMO and local jurisdiction have concurrent jurisdiction. [Rule 0780-2-3-.07 Issuance of Permits]

All plans submittals which include registrant sealed design drawings, completed Plans Review Submittal form (PRSF), and a Fee must be sent to the Nashville office for processing to initiate the plans review and approval process.

State of Tennessee  
Department of Commerce and Insurance  
Division of Fire Prevention  
Codes Enforcement Section  
500 James Robertson Parkway, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243-1162  
Phone: 615-741-7190 Fax: 615-253-3267  
[www.state.tn.us/commerce/sfm/fpcesect.html](http://www.state.tn.us/commerce/sfm/fpcesect.html)

A plans submittal received from an Architect/Engineer of Record is date stamped once received, a TFM number is assigned to the building, and a plans examiner is assigned the project. The plans may take three to four weeks to review based on an individual plans examiner back log. Projects are reviewed in the order that they are received.

A plans examiner performs a thorough and detailed review applying statewide adopted fire, building, and life safety codes and standards based on the occupancy of the building. The initial review takes the most resources to perform. A plans examiner uses occupancy and specialty correction lists that have been developed over the years which identify commonly missed code items with code references. These lists are available on the Plans Review web site (Forms & Downloads). A Plans Review letter is sent to the Architect of Record with a copy to the owner listing code deficiencies unique to a project. The Architect must resubmit to the SFMO correcting the code deficiencies identified in the review by issuing revised sealed drawings or other form of contractual documentation (e.g., addenda, change orders, field orders, ASI, etc.). The plans examiner checks that the designer's review response corrects any outstanding code deficiencies. The designer can help speed up this process by providing a cover letter explaining where to find the corrected items which would ensure that all code deficiencies are corrected. The plans examiner issues a Second Plans Review listing any remaining code items that were not corrected. And the process repeats until the plans are approved.

Once all code deficiencies are corrected, a Plans Approval letter is issued, the approved Office Set is processed with SFMO approval stamps with a plans examiner's signature and date. The Job Site Set with the same processing stamps is sent to the Architect/Engineer of Record, who then sends it to the construction job site trailer for use by a Deputy State Fire Marshal (DSFM) field inspector. These inspectors compare approved building plans with what is being built and they identify any code deficiencies found during construction as documented on a field inspection Progress Report. The approved Office Set is sent for microfilming after a DSFM field inspector inspects the building during the construction process, performs life safety final inspections, and issues a Certificate of Occupancy. **The owner may legally occupy the building after receiving a Certificate of Occupancy.** [Rule 0780-2-3-.10 Certificate of Occupancy]